

# Uncovering Hegelian Connections: A New Look at Dewey's Early Educational Ideas

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## Abstract

This paper is dedicated to the investigation of an important, but not particularly well known connection between the work of Hegel and Dewey's early educational ideas. A brief exposition of Hegel's position in the *Philosophy of Right* is offered, with a particular focus on Hegel's idea of absolute freedom. This exposition is followed by an analysis of one of Dewey's earliest books, *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*. Hegelian notions of absolute freedom are shown to be present in the *Outlines*, and textual evidence is then presented which links the theoretical framework of the *Outlines* to Dewey's early educational thought.

## Introduction

Scholars agree that Hegel had an important influence on John Dewey's early work.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the precise nature of this influence is not always easy to discern; in his early works, Dewey mentions Hegel only rarely, and seldom refers to him. However, in his letters and in his later works, Dewey concedes that Hegel had a strong influence on his philosophy. For example, in a 1930 essay, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," Dewey acknowledges the influence of Hegel, noting that "acquaintance with Hegel has left a permanent deposit in my thinking."<sup>2</sup>

This paper is dedicated to the investigation of an important but not particularly well known, connection between the work of Hegel and Dewey's early educational ideas.<sup>3</sup> The analysis is divided into three parts. The first section of the paper is devoted to the preliminary task of outlining Hegel's conception of freedom. A subsequent analysis then traces, at length, how this idea forms the leitmotif of Dewey's *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891). In the final section, Hegelian freedom is linked to some of Dewey's educational work in the mid-to-late 1890s. Although it

is commonly thought that Hegel's formative influence on Dewey's work diminished after the *Psychology* (1887), this analysis demonstrates that an important strand of Hegelian thought influenced Dewey's educational thinking in a profound way.

## ***Hegel's Conception of Freedom***

Obviously, it is not particularly interesting to ask whether Dewey was a Hegelian—the historical record is clear and uncontroversial on this point. However, when one asks how Dewey was a Hegelian, matters get murkier and more interesting. In order to see the Hegelian influence in Dewey's work, it is necessary to have an understanding of Hegel. Therefore, in the first section of this paper, an attempt will be made to outline Hegel's notion of freedom, in order that we may then detect similar elements in Dewey's early work, and, ultimately, in *School and Society*.

Freedom is central to Hegel's philosophy; Hegel believed that a certain kind of freedom was the highest good.<sup>4</sup> Happiness may appear to be a more obvious candidate for the position of highest good—as Aristotle first pointed out, happiness is a state which everyone wants to achieve. Freedom, by contrast, if we define it as an absence of external restrictions on action, is quite consistent with a kind of life that most would think of as miserable—one can, for example, be poverty stricken and still be free in this sense. Yet this kind of “negative freedom” is not the type of freedom in which Hegel was interested. Although Hegel occasionally discusses this type of freedom (he calls it “personal freedom”), he does not praise it. At one point, he comments, “such an idea can only be taken to reveal an utter immaturity of thought, for it contains not even an inkling of the absolutely free will.”<sup>5</sup>

Another variety of freedom that appears in the *Philosophy of Right* is what Hegel calls “subjective freedom.” In his remarks on this type of freedom, Hegel refers to the example of Plato's *Republic*. In the ideal city described in the *Republic*, the Guardians assign particular crafts to the people living in the city.<sup>6</sup> Hegel comments, “In these circumstances the principle of subjective freedom is lacking, i.e., the principle that the individual's substantive activity . . . shall be mediated through his particular volition.”<sup>7</sup> In *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, Allen Wood offers the following comments on subjective freedom: “[W]hat it directly refers to is a kind of *action*, one that is reflective, conscious, explicitly chosen by the agent . . . Subjective freedom also includes actions that satisfy the agent's reflective interest in seeing our chosen plans and projects carried successfully to completion.”<sup>8</sup> Subjective freedom, which is characterized by thoughtfully chosen action (as opposed to the absence of restrictions, as in the case of personal freedom), is more appealing to Hegel than personal freedom. Still, although Hegel thought that subjective freedom is important for people, it was not the highest good. That distinction is reserved for something that Hegel called “absolute freedom.”

Hegel invented a new term to describe absolute freedom: *beisichselbstsein*, which means “being with oneself.” Like many German neologisms, the word has many meanings built into it. Wood suggests that *beisichselbstsein* includes notions of well-integrated self that has achieved self-awareness and self-mastery.<sup>9</sup> Even more

importantly, Wood notes that *beisichselbstsein* is a relational term; one is always being with oneself in some other that has been overcome.<sup>10</sup> Hegel commented on the process by which we come to be with ourselves in objects: “I do not penetrate an object until I understand it; it then ceases to stand over against me and I have taken from it the character of its own which it had in opposition to me. Just as Adam said to Eve: ‘Thou art flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone,’ so mind says: ‘This is mind of my mind and its foreign character has disappeared.’”<sup>11</sup> This is a rather elaborate description for a phenomenon that is quite familiar. If one wanted to describe *beisichselbstsein* in a more conventional way, one might say that it signifies “having it together” in an extremely strong sense—a sense which goes above and beyond the everyday meaning of the phrase. When you have it together in this special sense, you understand yourself, you control yourself, you understand your endeavors, and you believe in your endeavors. The things and people with which or with whom you work are not alien to you—you have overcome their foreignness and they have been incorporated into your self. You are with yourself in these things; they are mind of your mind.

Hegel’s notion of absolute freedom is embedded within a larger philosophical system; his philosophy of history is a narrative of humanity’s progress toward freedom. Hegel suggested that humans have been trying to grasp the meaning of freedom and embed it in a social order. This striving is described by Hegel as the movement of Spirit, a description which has occasioned a great deal of confusion. Contrary to what some believe, Spirit is not a godlike entity that determines the progress of human history from above. When Hegel discussed the “world spirit” and “national spirits,” he was pointing towards the way humans, and particular groups of humans, collectively understand freedom and instantiate this understanding within the structure of a particular society. Hegel summed up the development of the understanding freedom in human history as follows: “Firstly, that of the Orientals, who knew only that *one* is free, then that of the Greek and Roman world, which knew that *some* are free, and finally our own knowledge that *all* men as such are free, and that man is by nature free.”<sup>12</sup> In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel presented “a system of objective spirit for modern culture, the latest and deepest form in which spirit has attained to knowledge of its essence and expressed that essence in a social world.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, Hegel outlined a particular kind of social order and a corresponding set of individual attitudes, within which (the social order) and with which (the attitudes) we can be free.<sup>14</sup> He described this way of life in a section of the book entitled “Ethical Life” (*Sittlichkeit*).

The highest institution of ethical life, according to Hegel, is the state. Hegel gives a detailed description of the structure of the state he has in mind, but, for our purposes (namely, relating Hegel to Dewey), the most important and interesting aspect of Hegel’s state is not its objective side (its social structure), but rather its subjective side (the attitudes people have toward it).<sup>15</sup> A promising place to begin considering Hegel’s views on the subjective side of the state is his view of patriotism: “Patriotism is often understood to mean only a readiness for exceptional sacrifices

and actions. Essentially, however, it is the sentiment which, in the relationships of our daily life and under ordinary conditions, habitually recognizes that the community is one's substantive groundwork and end."<sup>16</sup> This view differs drastically from the conventional flag-waving, self-martyring understanding of patriotism. In the Hegelian state, patriotism means participating wholeheartedly in a reciprocal arrangement whereby the community sustains the citizen, and the good citizen looks to see how she can improve her community.

Still, some may not find these pronouncements about the state particularly reassuring. Recognizing "that the community is one's substantive groundwork and end" might be fine for people who have altruistic tendencies, but it also seems as though it might also compromise individual liberty, or, to use a Hegelian term, subjective freedom. Surely, one does not want to be absolutely free if one cannot also be subjectively free. Hegel, however, did not feel that individuals must abandon their particular interests in the face of the demands of the state. Instead, he thought that there was a harmony between the universal interest (the good of the community) and people's particular individual goods. He commented:

But concrete freedom consists in this, that personal individuality and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal . . . they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit. The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests.<sup>17</sup>

Suppose, for example, that an individual chooses to be a teacher. This occupation is congruent with her particular interests, and by pursuing this occupation, she is exercising her subjective freedom. Yet, under Hegel's conception, she not only pursues being a teacher for the sake of her own interests, but also with a view toward the interests of the community. Perhaps she is interested in improving children's welfare in school, or perhaps she is a professor in an economics department, helping to make the civil society function more smoothly. When one's personal interest and the social interest align in this way, one is free in the absolute sense.<sup>18</sup> In this state, the interests of others are not "other" for the individual; they are, in a sense, a part of the individual's own interests. Allen Wood sums up this state of mind: "Individuals must experience devotion to the common good not as a sacrifice of the private for the sake of something 'higher,' but simply as the ever-present deeper purpose behind everyday life which prevents it from being a mere private self-seeking."<sup>19</sup>

### ***The connection to Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics***

Before proceeding to the task of linking Dewey with Hegel, however, it is necessary to allay an important misconception about the *Philosophy of Right*. It is often suggested that this book is simply a glorification of the nineteenth-century Prussian state. In the preface to his biography of Hegel, Terry Pinkard notes that this is one

of the long-lasting myths about Hegel's thought. This myth, says Pinkard, is "clearly and demonstrably wrong, [and] has been known to be wrong in scholarly circles for a long time now."<sup>20</sup> Although Hegel was not an exponent of modern representative democracy, freedom is the cornerstone of his ethical thought. One might object, of course, that Hegel has an unusual description of freedom. Yet, as I have noted, Hegel thought that subjective freedom was a prerequisite for absolute freedom. Furthermore, as Allen Wood points out, "Hegel's state has a very liberal look to it."<sup>21</sup> This may be one of the reasons why Dewey, a dedicated democrat, used some of the most important theoretical elements of the *Philosophy of Right* when he wrote *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (henceforth to be referred to as *Outlines*).

Notably, previous commentators on Dewey have not pointed out the fact that the *Outlines* has some strong similarities with the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>22</sup> This is quite understandable, since Dewey was not explicit about the nature of the link between the Hegel's book and his own. Still, there is an initial clue which may put one on the right track. In the *Outlines*, Dewey makes a direct reference to Hegel.<sup>23</sup> He adds, to this reference, the following footnote: "I hardly need say how largely I am indebted in the treatment of this topic, and indeed, in the whole matter of the "ethical world," to Hegel."<sup>24</sup> Another worthwhile clue can be found in Dewey's method of laying out the "Division of Ethics" in his introduction to the book. His outline begins with right, proceeds to a consideration of duty, which then leads to a discussion of the question of freedom. Once this discussion is complete, Dewey says that he will "take up the various forms and institutions in which the good is objectively realized, the family, state, etc."<sup>25</sup> This outline mirrors the structure of the *Philosophy of Right*, which begins with abstract right, proceeds to morality (the emphasis here is on Kant), includes a discussion of ethical subjectivity, and closes with a long discourse on the family, the corporation, and the state.<sup>26</sup>

In 1891, when the *Outlines* was first published, the nature of Hegel's influence on Dewey might have been so clear that additional explanation was "hardly needed"; although the American Hegelian movement was fading by 1891, the American philosophical community was still steeped in Hegelian thought. A few decades later, however, Dewey's statement was no longer true—Hegel (especially the *Philosophy of Right*) was out of fashion. The connection between Dewey's *Outlines* and Hegel's ethical thought thus lapsed into the obscurity in which it resides today.

After having begun the *Outlines* with some criticism of existing moral frameworks, Dewey specified his own conception of the moral end. In especially large type, he remarked, "The moral end or the good is the realization by a person and as a person of individuality."<sup>27</sup> Dewey quickly elaborated upon this specification of the moral end. Individuality, said Dewey, has two sides: a person's particular capacities and his or her specific environment. These two sides are united when a person exercises his function. Dewey defined "function" as follows: "[It] is a term which we may use to express union of the two sides of individuality. The idea of function is that of an active relation established between power of doing, on one side, and something to be done on the other."<sup>28</sup> Dewey elaborated, "A function

thus includes two sides—the external and the internal—and reduces them to elements in one activity.”<sup>29</sup>

At this point in the text, Dewey has offered up a preliminary definition of the good in terms of function. On the surface, it might appear as though he is deviating from Hegel. The preceding exposition suggested that Hegel was an exponent of a specific notion of freedom as the good, and Dewey is talking about the good in terms of function, not freedom. However, a further investigation of Dewey’s notion of function will reveal that it actually has a close relationship to *beisichselbstsein*.

Functions, said Dewey, take the form of interests.<sup>30</sup> Interests have several important characteristics. They are active—they are connected with the occupations of human beings.<sup>31</sup> Interests are also associated with finding satisfaction in some object. Dewey elaborated: “Interest is the union in feeling, through action, of self and an object...To have an interest then, is to be alert, to have an object, and to find satisfaction in an activity which brings this object home to self.”<sup>32</sup> Bringing the object<sup>33</sup> home to self, is, of course, *beisichselbstsein*—absolute freedom in the Hegelian sense. For Dewey, when one has an interest in an object, one aims to be with oneself in the object. Thus, the same notion of absolute freedom serves as the highest good for both Dewey and Hegel (at least in the *Outlines*). This function→interest→freedom link might appear to be rather tenuous and circuitous, but Dewey made the link more directly later in the text—he remarked, “In the performance of his own function the agent satisfies his own interests and gains power. In it is found his *freedom*.”<sup>34</sup>

Following the discussion of functions as interests, Dewey devoted the next few sections of the text to the task of demonstrating a harmony between individual and social interests. Recall that, in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel postulated a similar harmony between people’s particular and universal interests. Recall the example of the good teacher: the teacher has a love of teaching that she finds personally satisfying, but she also pursues her teaching with a view toward the good of the community. Thus, in the case of the good teacher, there is a harmony between the individual and social interests. A belief in exactly this kind of harmony was at the heart of Dewey’s thought in the *Outlines*. He commented: “If man is truly a social being, constituted by his relationships to others, then social action must inevitably realize himself, and be, in that sense, egoistic. And on the other hand, if the individual’s interest is in himself *as a member of society*, then such interest is thoroughly altruistic.”<sup>35</sup> Dewey called this harmony the “ethical postulate.” He makes bold claims for this postulate; he says that all moral conduct and moral theory is based upon it. He restates it in capital letters, as follows:

IN THE REALIZATION OF INDIVIDUALITY THERE IS FOUND ALSO THE NEEDED REALIZATION OF SOME COMMUNITY OF PERSONS OF WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL IS A MEMBER; AND, CONVERSELY, THE AGENT WHO DULY SATISFIES THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH HE SHARES, BY THAT SAME CONDUCT SATISFIES HIMSELF.<sup>36</sup>

It is abundantly clear that the same principle that is the heart of Hegelian ethical life is also at the heart of Dewey's thought in the *Outlines*. For Dewey, as for Hegel, there was no gulf between acting for your own good and acting for the good of the community. For both Dewey and Hegel, one must act in absolute freedom. Acting in an absolutely free way means being with yourself in terms of both your work and your community. Your work and community must not confront you as alien; they must instead be integrated with your self—they must be a part of you.

### ***The Status of Work in the Outlines***

At this point in the *Outlines*, Dewey has outlined his core thesis, and the key correspondences to Hegel are visible. Still, some important questions remain about how Dewey's ideal can be realized. In the case of teachers, it is not difficult to see a harmony between the realization of the individual and the realization of the community. However, in the case of some other occupations—the factory worker, for example—the harmony between individual and social interests seems somewhat more difficult to discern. Dewey devoted significant energy to examining these kinds of questions regarding workers.

One of the first problems that Dewey addressed in this regard is whether workers' occupations were merely a means to some other end. If this were true in a broad sense, it would disrupt the harmony between individual and social interests. Dewey gave two examples in which this harmony seems to be disrupted: 1) One could work merely for the money. 2) One could work merely for the good of society. These particular examples of individual-social disharmony are worthwhile; a significant number of workers approach their work in the former way, and the latter approach is also taken occasionally.

Dewey's response to this problem is as follows—he remarks, “it may be questioned whether a carpenter whose aim was consciously beyond the work he was doing would be a good workman.”<sup>37</sup> Clearly, it is possible to work merely for the money or merely for society, but Dewey didn't think that one could be a good worker in these instances. The good worker may very well think about how she may gain from the work, and about how others may gain, but she must not do the work as a mere means to either of these two ends. If one is alienated from one's work in this way, one is failing in terms of one's function; one is failing to work with the object and bring it home to one's self. A worker like this enslaves himself; Dewey remarked, “Every action which is not in the line of performance of functions must necessarily result in self-enslavement. The end of desire is activity, and it is only in fullness and unity of activity that freedom is found.”<sup>38</sup> As has already been noted, both Dewey and Hegel believed that achieving a harmony with one's work was an important aspect of being free.

A related question that Dewey addressed concerns the moral status of the good worker. He asked, “Are we ready to say that a good chemist or good carpenter or a good citizen is, in so far, a good man?”<sup>39</sup> This is a reasonable question; a good father or a good citizen seems to tend to the interests of others in a way that the



good chemist does not. Dewey agreed that a good chemist may not be a good man, insofar as “good chemist” means “competent chemist.” However, there is another sense of “good,” through which the good chemist can be a good man.<sup>40</sup> Dewey adopted an orientation that is an important part of Hegel’s ethical thought: an ethic of self-actualization.<sup>41</sup> In a theory like this, the subject does not have a rigid ideal of the “good chemist” in mind that he is “filling in.” Instead, he simply thinks of himself as a good chemist, and chooses actions along the way that are in accordance with this ideal. Dewey comments, “It must be remembered that the moral end does not refer to some consequence which happens, *de facto*, to be reached. It refers to an end *willed*, i.e., to an idea held to and realized as an idea.”<sup>42</sup> In addition, the results that he attains and the amount of approbation he receives from others does not matter—Dewey noted, “moral goodness pertains to the kind of idea or end which a man clings to, and not to what he happens to effect visibly to others.”<sup>43</sup>

This reasoning does not yet establish the goodness of the aspiring chemist—a further explanation is needed of the moral significance of work. Dewey’s reasoning here is closely aligned with the ethical postulate. He remarked, “The position then is that intellectual and artistic<sup>44</sup> interests *are themselves* social, when considered in the completeness of their relations—that interest in the development of intelligence is, in and of itself, interest in the well-being of society.”<sup>45</sup> Simply by virtue of his interest in the development of intelligence, the aspiring chemist has an interest in the improvement of society. Therefore, since the dedicated, wholehearted worker appears to have an interest in society by default, his interest in his work is a moral interest. Yet Dewey also noted the good worker has an additional interest in the community that is more significant than this default interest. This further interest is characterized by a faith that the performance of function (of which being a good worker is a part) will constitute a good community.<sup>46</sup> Clearly, Dewey felt that good work, as he defined it, was something to aspire to in one’s actions. Good work does not make people completely free, but it is a critical part of being free—of being with oneself and being with others in a non-alienated way.

### ***Linking the Outlines to Dewey’s Early Educational Thought***

Dewey’s thought, especially his early work, is suffused with Hegelian ideas. In the preceding analysis, I have suggested that one particular idea—Hegel’s notion of freedom—is especially prominent in *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*. Yet, the *Outlines* is not the only place in which this idea can be detected; the idea of absolute freedom also colors Dewey’s educational thought.

This claim may occasion some skepticism. Morton White contends that, by the time Dewey wrote the *Outlines* (published in 1891), he was already beginning to move away from orthodox Hegelianism.<sup>47</sup> Dewey had read James’ *Principles of Psychology* in 1891, and had written to James to express his appreciation of the book.<sup>48</sup> His level of interest in the *Principles* was high; he held a graduate seminar on the book during the same year.<sup>49</sup> In addition to James, other thinkers had



a significant influence upon Dewey. In his *Psychology*, Dewey cited the influence of Johann Herbart, and he also wrote an essay for the National Herbart Society in which he acknowledged the importance of Herbart's educational ideas. Dewey was also aware of the ideas of Friedrich Froebel—a chapter of *School and Society* is dedicated to explaining the congruence of Dewey's system with certain elements of Froebel's educational principles.<sup>50</sup>

Yet although James and Herbart were important influences upon Dewey, Hegel's influence was not eclipsed. In an 1893 letter to his former student, James Angell, Dewey wrote, "While I continue to get more and more out of Hegel, I get less and less out of the Hegelians so-called."<sup>51</sup> In the same letter, he added, "Metaphysics has had its day, and if the truths which Hegel saw cannot be stated as direct, practical truths, they are not true."<sup>52</sup> This seems to be precisely the task with which Dewey was engaged in the *Outlines*.

Still, a reaffirmed commitment to Hegel, in 1893, is not yet enough to satisfy those who are skeptical about the connection between Hegel and Dewey's educational thought. Dewey's educational writings did not start in earnest until 1894, after he had moved to the University of Chicago. Yet although Dewey did not refer directly to Hegel in these educational writings, there is a clear link between his thought in the *Outlines* and his subsequent educational thought. In 1895, one year before he started the University Elementary School, Dewey laid out a syllabus for a university extension course entitled "Educational Ethics." The first lecture was called "Ethical Problem of the School," and bears the subtitle "WHAT IS A SCHOOL?"<sup>53</sup> Dewey outlined the latter half of the lecture as follows:

#### IV. The Ethic of the School.

1. Ideal is development of social consciousness,
2. This definition complete, because
  - a. Recognizing social end.
  - b. Recognizing individual means.
  - c. Means and end not external, but i) only end enables us to *interpret* means, and ii) only means gives any *content* to end.

#### V. This Ethical Standard Must Be Applied.

1. To form, or *method*.
2. To content, or subject-matter (studies).
3. To school life as whole, vital unity of method and studies.

#### VI. The Ethical Hypothesis or Postulate; Unity of Development of Individuality and of Social Service.<sup>54</sup>

The central role of the ethical postulate is clear. Below this outline, Dewey added a reference to the *Outlines*, as well as to a later book, *Study of Ethics*.<sup>55</sup> Point VI of the outline makes direct reference to the ethical postulate, and Point IV is also a restatement of the ethical postulate, although Dewey's language here is less clear. If one examines sub point 2c, one can see that Dewey was emphasizing the harmony between the means (an individual's pursuits in terms of work, self, and others) and

the end (the good community). Dewey noted that the means and end were “not external,” by which he meant that they were mutually dependent.

Dewey’s lecture outlines are followed by “exercises” in which he poses questions to his students. Some of the exercises for the “Ethical Problem of the School” lecture illuminate Dewey’s radical aims for the school:

2. What is the theoretical justification of the remark attributed to Leibniz, that if he could order the schools of Europe for a generation he could revolutionize the civilization of Europe?
3. If the school reflects community life, and community life depends upon the habits acquired in school, can we get out of a hopeless circle?
4. Point out phases of excessive individualism in existing social life that seem to you to be developed or reinforced by existing school methods . . .<sup>56</sup>
5. Point out facts in the existing school life that positively corroborate the postulate.

This first lecture on “Educational Ethics” constitutes strong evidence that Dewey had a reformist educational agenda that carried a significant tinge of Hegelian ethical thought. Notably, this conclusion is also borne out by the closing lecture in the series, “The Problem of Social Progress”—in it, Dewey notes that the school reconciles the “two traditionally opposed principles” of the individual and the community. He then outlines the link between the school and four other social institutions: the family, industrial society, political institutions, and the church.<sup>57</sup> The remaking of the school that Dewey had in mind is clearly one which was consonant with the ethical postulate in that it would provide for the harmony of the individual and the social. It was a vision of the school that provided for absolute freedom; Dewey wanted to build an embryonic society within the school that would allow one to be with oneself in terms of one’s work, one’s self, and one’s community.

Once one is acquainted with Hegel’s ethical thought and Dewey’s adaptation of it in the 1895 Educational Ethics course, it is not difficult to detect the influence of these ideas in other early educational works.<sup>58</sup> For example, In “My Pedagogic Creed,” (1897) there are a number of pronouncements about the importance of the school’s role in harmonizing the individual and the social.<sup>59</sup> These sentiments also appear in the opening paragraph of the *School and Society* (1899): “All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to its future self. Here individualism and socialism are one.”<sup>60</sup> Individualism and socialism are one precisely because, in keeping with the ethical postulate, there is no tension between properly conceived individual pursuits and promotion of the good community.

This proposition was clearly reflected in the way that the Dewey School was run. An ethos of cooperation infused the school—one of the key aims of education through occupations, the school’s core method, was to develop habits of cooperation among the children. The children worked together on difficult and intricate tasks

(e.g., constructing a smelter to melt metal) which required carefully coordinated efforts. Although Dewey is more widely known today as an advocate of child-centered education, and there was certainly an emphasis, within the school's activities, on allowing children to develop and pursue their individual interests, there was an even stronger emphasis on teaching children to learn and inquire together. In the context of Dewey's early ethical thought, an effective education meant teaching children to do good, socially minded, work. Ideally, the individual and social dimensions were to be harmonized completely. In his introduction to Mayhew and Edwards's *The Dewey School*, Dewey suggested that "the problem of the relation between individual freedom and social well-being," was central, and emphasized that the "chief task" of the school was to create a form of life in which these two values could be reconciled.<sup>61</sup>

The connection between Dewey and Hegel is also illuminating in that some of Dewey's remarks about work in *School and Society*, which may otherwise seem puzzling, become more understandable in light of his earlier adaptation of Hegelian views. For example, consider the following remark:

But the great thing for one as for the other is that each shall have had the education which enables him to see within his daily work all there is in it of large and human significance. How many of the employed are today mere appendages to the machines they operate! This may be due in part to the machine itself or the regime which lays so much stress upon the products of the machine, but it is certainly due in large part to the fact that the worker has had no opportunity to develop his imagination and his sympathetic insight as to the social and scientific values found in his work.<sup>62</sup>

There is an obvious objection that can be offered in response to these comments. If one is an alienated factory worker, it does not seem as though seeing the "social and scientific value" in one's work will do much to ameliorate one's misery. Yet the exposition of Dewey's views on work in the *Outlines* should clarify Dewey's point here. Dewey believed that seeing the social meaning of work (and understanding the science of work is part of seeing the social meaning of it) was a crucial aspect of doing good work. Seeing the social significance of the work is what allows it to gain a moral significance, to go beyond a mere means to an end. If workers see the social significance in their work, they can be at home with it.

A skeptic might suggest that, regardless of whether the factory worker is at home or "with herself" in her work, she is still doing the same repetitive work and is still being exploited by the factory owner. This view, however, assumes that all other conditions are held equal while the worker develops a consciousness of the social significance of her work. Workers that were trained through Deweyan education through occupations might be disposed to demand changes in the structure of work. The Dewey School was intended to teach students to appreciate the social significance of their work, with a special emphasis on the nature and provenance of the science and technology involved.<sup>63</sup> Workers who had received an education like this might be disposed to demand recognition and power commensurate with the

work's significance. Instead of allowing themselves to be marginalized and exploited by others in society, they would demand a transformation of their role in society that would allow them to be at home—to be with themselves—in their work.

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explained that the process of education was “to make human beings ethical” and involved the creation of a “second nature” through right habit.<sup>64</sup> He further suggested that citizens should not see ethical practice as something outside of them or even something to have faith in, but rather as something that was a part of themselves.<sup>65</sup> The Dewey School accorded with these principles completely. Dewey felt that the way to teach a child correct principles was to immerse the child in an environment that instantiated those principles constantly. This did not mean harping on the importance of learning ethical rules, but rather implied the immersion of the child in an ethical community. At first, the child learned of ethical principles (e.g., the harmony of the individual and the social) implicitly through the cooperative ethos of the Dewey School, but later, they were encouraged to think about these ideas carefully.<sup>66</sup> In this way, students could learn to be “with themselves” not just unconsciously, but reflectively.

In the first chapter of *School and Society*, Dewey offered the following definition of society: “A society is a number of people held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with reference to common aims. The common needs and aims demand a growing interchange of thought and growing unity of sympathetic feeling.”<sup>67</sup> This is a strong definition that certainly doesn't describe the liberal democracies of today. Yet, to think of this definition as descriptive is to miss its significance. Dewey's definition of society was, instead, a prescriptive definition—a normative, Hegelian definition that Dewey hoped would become true. Throughout the course of his career, Dewey moved away from orthodox Hegelianism, but he never abandoned an essential faith in the ethical postulate, and thus in a reconciliation of the individual and the social. This faith was present in the *Outlines*, it was present in *School and Society*, and one can also find it in later works such as *Individualism: Old and New* as well. In his early writings, in order to move society in the direction of this goal, Dewey had the idea of creating an embryonic society within a school. The common spirit and common aims of this embryonic society were the conditions necessary for the actualization of absolute freedom. When he conceived his experimental school, Dewey intended to offer an education that was liberal in a strong sense. In essence, he developed a system of education that would be not only appropriate for free people, but was also intended to help people achieve freedom together.

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 13-32; George Dykhuizen, *The Life and Mind of John Dewey* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 43-63; Neil Coughlan, *Young John Dewey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 18-86; James A. Good, *A Search for Unity in Diversity: The Permanent Hegelian Deposit in the Philosophy of John Dewey* (Lanham: Lexington Book, 2006); Richard Rorty, "Dewey between Hegel and Darwin," in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930*, ed. Dorothy Ross (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 54-68; Jennifer Welchman, "From Absolute Idealism to Instrumentalism: The Problem of Dewey's Early Philosophy," in *Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society* 25, no. 4 (1989): 407-419.

2. LW 5: 154.

3. It should be noted that there are also some interesting connections between Dewey's later work and Hegelian ideas. The connections between Hegel and Dewey's early work, however, are stronger and more obvious.

4. Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 20.

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), sec. 15R.

6. E.g., "You there, Phidias, you're going to be a farmer."

7. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 299R

8. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 38

9. Ibid., 45.

10. Ibid., 45.

11. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 4A. Notably, there are some disquieting elements in this language of overcoming the object. However, although this is an important issue, it does not fall within the scope of this discussion, which is simply to explain Hegel's views on freedom.

12. Quoted in Terry Pinkard, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 492. One can certainly find a variety of reasons to take issue with this particular statement. However, I am not trying to justify or vindicate Hegel's view of history in this account.

13. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 20.

14. Ibid., 196-97.

15. Hegel's account of the objective side of freedom is important, but I have chosen not to make it a significant focus of this paper. There are several reasons for this. First, the account of freedom from the objective side is complex, and presents a significant expository task. In addition to this, the objective side of the account does not seem to be of as much interest to Dewey as the subjective side is. However, this doesn't mean that we can dismiss this aspect of the story. Freedom is not something that can be achieved entirely from the subjective side—the objective side of the situation (the social structure) plays a critical role in making freedom possible. There are also some interesting possible connections between Dewey and Hegel in terms of their thinking about social structures (e.g., they both seem to have an interest in the corporation) which warrant further investigation.

16. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 268R.

17. Ibid., sec. 260.

18. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 239.

19. Ibid., 239.

20. Pinkard, *Hegel*, ix.

21. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 258.
22. EW 3: xxi-xxxviii.
23. EW 3: 357.
24. *Ibid.*, 357.
25. *Ibid.*, 243.
26. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 3-8.
27. *Ibid.*, 301.
28. *Ibid.*, 303.
29. *Ibid.*, 304.
30. *Ibid.*, 304.
31. *Ibid.*, 305.
32. *Ibid.*, 305.
33. "Object" is meant in the philosophical sense here.
34. EW 3: 327.
35. *Ibid.*, 308.
36. *Ibid.*, 322.
37. *Ibid.*, 311.
38. *Ibid.*, 344.
39. *Ibid.*, 311.
40. Perhaps not unqualifiedly good, but good in a certain way.
41. See Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 30-32.
42. EW 3: 312.
43. *Ibid.*, 312.
44. It is important to note that Dewey thinks that crafts, e.g., carpentry, are artistic.
45. EW 3: 315.
46. For example, Dewey suggests at one point that scientists have "a *faith* in the social bearing of what [they are] doing." See EW 3: 317.
47. Morton White, *The Origin of Dewey's Instrumentalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 99.
48. John Dewey to William James, 1891.5.6, Dewey Correspondence, Southern Illinois University–Carbondale.
49. John Dewey to William James, 1891.5.10, Dewey Correspondence.
50. The question of Froebel's influence on Dewey is an interesting one. Froebel was influenced by German idealism, and one could conjecture that Dewey might have been influenced by Hegelian currents within Froebel's work. However, there are good reasons to doubt that this is the case. First, Froebel appears to have been influenced more by Schelling than by Hegel. Second, Froebel was more of a mystic than a systematic, scientific thinker. This is amply evidenced in Froebel's writings. Consider, for example, the following remark about crystals: "the stones in my hand and under my eyes turned to living, speaking forms. The crystal-world, in symbolic fashion, bore unimpeachable witness to me, through its brilliant unvarying shapes of life and laws of human life, and spake to me with silent yet true and readable speech of the real life of the world of mankind." See Irene Lilley, *Friedrich Froebel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 15; Friedrich Froebel, *Autobiography of Froebel*, ed. C.W. Bardeen, trans. Emilie Michaelis and H. Keatly Moore (Syracuse: School Bulletin Publications, 1889), 112. Although Dewey acknowledges Froebel's importance in *School and Society*, he also offers the following comment on Froebel: "To the impartial observer it is obvious that many of his statements are cumbrous and far-fetched." See MW 1: 84.
51. John Dewey to James Angell, 1893.5.10, Dewey Correspondence.

- 52. Ibid.
- 53. EW 5: 292.
- 54. Ibid.
- 55. Ibid., 292-93
- 56. Ibid., 293.
- 57. Ibid., 300-01. Hegel also discusses the first three institutions in the same order in his discussion of ethical life. See *Philosophy of Right*, 3-8.
- 58. It should be noted that although I argue that there are similarities between Dewey and Hegel, there are also many important differences. For example, Dewey was a strong proponent of democracy, whereas Hegel was working within a much more restrictive political context. Dewey's philosophical approach also differs drastically from Hegel's speculative logic.
- 59. EW 5: 93-94.
- 60. Dewey, *The School and Society and the Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 7.
- 61. John Dewey, "Introduction," in Katherine Mayhew and Anna Edwards, *The Dewey School* (Chicago: D. Appleton Century Co., 1936), xv.
- 62. Dewey, *School and Society*, 23-24.
- 63. See Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 314.
- 64. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, sec. 151.
- 65. Ibid., sec. 147.
- 66. Mayhew and Edwards, *The Dewey School*, 23, 94, 314, 319.
- 67. Dewey, *School and Society*, 14.

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